



Department of Justice

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MISSISSIPPI WOMAN SENTENCED FOR COORDINATING THE SUBMISSION OF FALSE 'FEN-PHEN' CLAIMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A Mississippi woman has been sentenced to 31 months in prison for her role in falsifying prescription documents on behalf of others in order to obtain funds from a settlement fund established for injuries caused by the so-called “fen-phen” drugs, the Department of Justice announced today.

At a hearing yesterday, U.S. District Judge William H. Barbour, Jr., of the Southern District of Mississippi sentenced Eva Johnson of Fayette, Mississippi to 31 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release. Johnson participated in the scheme to file false prescription documents on behalf of others in order to obtain funds from a \$400 million settlement fund established following a suit against American Home Products, the maker of the diet drugs Redux and Pondomin, for injuries caused by fen-phen. Johnson was also ordered to pay \$750,000 in restitution.

Johnson pleaded guilty Dec. 29, 2004, to a one-count information charging conspiracy to commit wire fraud and one count of tax evasion. Johnson, working with other individuals also under investigation, caused false documents to be submitted to the diet drug settlement fund, allowing three other individuals to each receive an award of \$250,000 minus expenses and attorneys' fees. Johnson also helped to coordinate other claimants' false submissions.

Johnson's guilty plea came as part of an ongoing investigation into large-scale fraud and corruption in a series of Mississippi fen-phen lawsuits. Eleven other individuals have pleaded guilty and been sentenced in connection with this investigation. Three other individuals have pleaded guilty and are awaiting sentencing.

This case is being handled by Criminal Chief John Dowdy and Assistant United States Attorneys Richard Starrett and Cindy Eldridge of the Southern District of Mississippi, Assistant Chief Robertson Park and Trial Attorneys Rina Tucker and John Cunningham of the Criminal Division's Fraud Section, and Trial Attorney Nicholas Marsh of the Criminal Division's Public Integrity Section, which is headed by Section Chief Noel L. Hillman. The case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Internal Revenue Service in Jackson, Mississippi.

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